



# Air Force, Marines pull together for **UNIFIED ASSISTANCE**



▲ Staff. Sgt Jermaine Miller (Right) from the 18th Communications Squadron at Kadena AB, Japan, works with Marines from the 7th Communications Battalion while in Thailand.



Marine and Air Force communicators responded to the devastation within hours giving emergency responders the comm needed to get the job done.

**By Maj. Roger Vrooman**  
PACAF/SCNS

**HICKAM AIR FORCE BASE, Hawaii** — Following the Dec. 26 tsunami that ravaged many countries in Southeast Asia, a relief effort kicked off and Air Force communicators were in Thailand as early as Dec. 28 supporting the multi-national, multi-organization relief efforts.

Air Force members from across the Pacific teamed up to form the Air Force Communications and

Information Directorate in support of Pacific Command and Combined Support Force – 536, also known as Operation Unified Assistance. **Air Force communicators were responsible for providing command and control networks including DSN, NIPR and SIPR for more than 650 users from all services along with the Japanese Air Self Defense Force.** Airmen from 13th Air Force, stationed at Andersen AFB, Guam, and Headquarters Pacific Air Forces here, were first on scene and were soon followed by a 29-person Theater Deployable Communication team from the 18th Communications Squadron at Kadena AB, Japan. A three-person power production and heating, ventilation and air conditioning team was dispatched from Guam to assist the TDC package with its power and cooling needs. Later, a six-person team from the Hawaii Air National Guard's 293rd Combat Communications Squadron also provided support.

The 29-person 18th Expeditionary Communications Flight and the 286-person Marine Corps' 7th

Communications Battalion from Camp Courtney, Okinawa, provided tactical communications to users based out of the Utapao Royal Naval Air Station, Thailand.

The 7th CBN delivered communications for HQ CSF users in Camp Red Horse, basing the Joint Operations Center, the Joint Command and Control Center and Air Component Coordination Element, while the 18th ECF provided communications supporting flying missions from all services, the AFFOR staff in Camp Thor and the JASDF.

**In a first for both units, their networks were linked via a fiber link at the application level to provide backup services. If one service's satellite communications link went down, its traffic would be instantaneously routed through the other services' terminal.** The net result was one Marine and Air Force team providing a robust network in five separate locations for all 1,600 users on Utapao RNAS.

Both units performed exceptionally well and demonstrated an outstanding sense of urgency and selflessness that led to mission success, according to

the Director, Joint Communications Control Center, Marine Lt. Col. James Breitingner.

"The expeditionary nature of Air Force communications was remarkable and their technical insight was paramount to the overall success of the command and control mission of CSF-536. All efforts were essential to the successful launch and recovery of more than 932 Air Force sorties delivering in excess of 4.6 million pounds of cargo and the bed-down of 14,823 personnel in the theater in support of OUA." (*Capt. Robert Bonner of the 18th CS, contributed to this article.*)

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Specialists from the 18th Communications Squadron at Kadena set up the USC-60A at Utapao Royal Naval Air Station, Thailand.

Courtesy photos